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Title: Racial Segregation Within Track and Field Team

About the Author: I'm currently at the end of my Freshman year at the University of Illinois majoring in Agri-Business. I recieved a partial scholarship to run track here at the University. Running track has been a big part of my life and has already been a great experience during the first season. I come from a small school in Western Illinois where everyone knows everyone. I'm very motivated at working hard in school and in track.

Keywords: segregation sports race

Abstract: Does racial segregation occur within the mens track and field team at the University of Illinois? If so when does it occur? From doing all of my research I found that in general racial segregation occurs only outside of track. During track, such as practices and competitions, we usually get along with everyone because we share the same interests in what we are doing, which is running track. Outside of track and field it's a little different. We come from different backgrounds and have different interests in music, clothes, girls and so on. Most of my findings were found doing my group observation of the team.

Initial Exercises:

SEGREGATION

Most often no matter where you are at you can recognize racial segregation. Walking down the street, driving around town, going to the movies, or even in the classroom. Racial segregation can be a very powerful thing even in today's world. Why is it that we as humans separate ourselves by the color of our skin? Why do we choose to hang out with our same race? How come we never hang out with people of different races? After all, we are all created equal and there is no one race that is better than another.

Coming from an all white school there was never any types of segregation by race. People segregated like many schools would, by interests. You had your jocks, geeks, gothic's, drugies and so on. Since coming to this university I could see the segregation within the first week. Never seeing this before was something

new to me but I got used to it really quick. I didn't think much of it but now I realize that it's a shame that we can't all get along. Being around a new race for the first time was very strange for me. You don't know what to expect out of it. It's hard to know what to say because you don't know how easily you could offend someone of a different race. After a couple of months I don't even think about my teammates being African American. I had to be around them every day and I've got used to the feeling of being around them. I got to know them all better and realized what their personalities were like. It's not strange for me anymore. If everyone in this country were forced to socialize with a different race for a few weeks we could possibly eliminate segregation. Even focusing more on teaching youth that race doesn't matter. Learning at an early age could really affect someone's future. We would all know what to expect and not judge people by the color of their skin.

One reason why people segregate by their race is to feel safe and comfortable. Communication can really intimidate someone when speaking to someone of another race. Asking one of my classmates to respond to his thoughts of group segregation he stated that "Coming from a school where everyone was either African American or Mexican and then coming here to this University was very odd. I had trouble adapting to seeing and being around people of different races. I didn't know what to say to them." Knowing what to say might be a reason why we don't even try to socialize with other people. What if we say something wrong? You don't know how the person is going to react if you make a wrong

comment and so to feel safe we just make sure we never make that comment. It would be easy to think you're making a nice comment towards someone but in reality you could really be offending them. That is why some people don't even take a chance. They just don't put themselves in that position to make an offending comment towards someone of a different race. We don't understand how different we are from each other. Certain words could mean much more than what we think they do when using them with another race. That is part of the reason why I was so shy around my teammates in the beginning. Now having experience around African Americans I have a better understanding of their feeling so therefore I know what I can talk about and what not to talk about. Experience can play a role in feeling safe around a different race.

Group segregation may have to do with familiarity of races. This is another reason why people who don't associate with other races feel uncomfortable and unsafe. Having experience around another race can truly make a difference. That is what happened with my experiences. Since I've been around different races for several months now, I notice myself getting more comfortable all the time. Some have a hard time even giving it a try. It's hard to take that first step into associating with another race but once you do it the first time, you will be more comfortable from then on. Sometimes people can display bad intentions but not meaning to do so and that will make people leery of giving it a try. Amoja Three Rivers says "even those with the best of intentions will display bad cultural manners. This does not necessarily mean that one is a bad person. Sometimes people just don't know any better (p.29)." Sometimes media can often influence ones mind. Media can make

people think bad about another race because of their opinions even though that certain race may not have a personality such as what you see. Some may think they are already familiar with a race by what they see and hear but they won't know for sure until they experience it themselves. For example some black people may think that all white people are racist and therefore doesn't want to trust them because of what they see and hear from past events such as the Civil War. One event or person can influence the minds of many people. People will never know for sure what's like though until they have their own experiences with other races.

Time is a very important thing when dealing with racism. When interviewing a teammate of mine he says that "Everyday we're straying more and more from segregation. We're getting closer to reaching equality in race. Since we are surrounded by different races daily we get used to that, we are slowly maturing." There is still much group segregation going on in today's world but there are also more people going out of their comfort zones and meeting people of different races. Since there is more diversity, such as on a campus, we are sometimes forced to meet new people. We are maturing and straying from group segregation. So why doesn't everyone stray from it? Not everyone wants to go out of their comfort zones. They are happy with the people they choose to hang out with. Once they associate more and more with different races then they will realize that they don't have to hang out with just their own race. George Fredrickson states that "We are still far from achieving the degree of racial and ethnic tolerance that realization of such an ideal requires (p.572)." Not everyone is going to realize

that associating with another race can often times be a good experience.

Unfortunately, some people have a bad experience with another race and are too afraid to try again. It will surely be a long time before everyone associates with every race and there is no segregation.

Although our society is trying to change racial segregation by creating diversity we may never see the day when there is absolutely no segregation. There are many factors that can cause racial segregation such as comfort levels, safety levels, and time. Sometimes we have to go out of our comfort zones even though it doesn't feel right. That's what it's going to take to make our country a better, more diverse place.

Question: Why do people judge athletes by the color of their skin? Why is it that we segregate my race in certain sports? Having experience with a college sport will make it easier for me to research a topic like this. My first question is something that I hear teammates say a lot. We all came from different backgrounds but when we got here to the U of I we can all relate to each other because we are on the same team. Even though some of us have only been around one race it's not that different when we are around that different race. My second question is asking why students and faculty often judge us athletes by the color of our skin. For example I often get asked if I'm a long distance runner. Many people think that just because I'm white doesn't mean that I have sprint speed. They would never ask a Black person that same question because you never see any black distance runners unless they are from another country. I think that I have plenty of examples to elaborate more on these ideas. I've talked to my teammates about this paper already and they have already filled me in with their own stories.

Plan: For my project I first plan on making a survey to give out to students. I plan on giving an equal amount of surveys out to regular students in my dorm and student athletes. The survey will be based on questions on their perspectives of student athletes here at the university. After collecting the surveys I will then have people's thoughts on what they think about student athletes in general and race within student athletes. I can then write about how student's perspectives were different.

Hopefully the student athletes will have different opinions than students in my dorm.

Next, I plan on interviewing some people on my team. In my survey there will not be any written answers so I plan on using this interview to get peoples personal thoughts on race within sports. I have a few teammates in mind as well as a few friends that would have different opinions. With these opinions I will hope to have personal stories that I can talk about. Everyone comes from different backgrounds and I just want to see how race has affected them in athletics. I just want to find out if there was difficulty adapting to a new environment.

The last research I plan on doing is observing the track team. This would be very easy for me to do since I can do it almost any day. Just listening to conversations can give me some thoughts. Often times I hear teammates talking about some of the best guys in the nation and race has come up before. Professional sports is something that gets brought up and often ends up being controversial. Black guys on the team often have different opinions than white guys. Just a couple months ago they were arguing about who was going to be the heisman trophy winner in college football. Most of the black guys were arguing that it was going to be Darren McFadden from Arkansas and the white guys were saying that it was going to be Tim Tebow. It just seems like we are always arguing about something and most of the time it's blacks against whites.

Data:

Group Observation

Observing athletes is something that I get the opportunity to do every day.

Throughout this year I have witnessed many conversations regarding race within athletics. Teammates of mine tend to argue at least once during every practice, usually at the beginning. Listening to their conversations can really leave me with some interesting thoughts.

During the first couple of weeks of fall practice is when I learned the most about my teammates. Meeting new people doesn't take long to learn their personalities. Within these first few weeks was when I learned about one teammate in particular. He always had to go against what someone was saying. No matter what topic you were talking about he would go against you. At first I just thought that he was the type that just wanted to argue, but I was wrong. After listening to these arguments for a few months I came to the conclusion that he would argue to support his own race which is African American. My teammates and I usually talk sports, football and track in particular. We would talk about the best quarterbacks in the NFL and the fastest professional track runners. I remember one conversation very well about track athletes. We were discussing fast 400 meter runners and the team decided that Jeremy Wariner was the fastest. With Jeremy Wariner being white, this particular teammate just had to choose someone else. He said the Michael Johnson, who was African American, was the fastest. Even though the rest of the team thought Jeremy Wariner was faster this athlete wouldn't change his opinion one bit and wouldn't give credit to the white sprinter. After having multiple arguments such as these about professional athletes I finally decided that he just supports his own race.

Team interaction is something that I was very surprised about when first joining

the team. All of us athletes came from different backgrounds such as big schools, small schools, black schools, white schools, mixed schools, etc. Even though we grew up differently we are all like a little family when it comes to track. With someone like myself coming from a farm and going to an all white school of around 250 students, I wasn't sure what to think of the other black kids on my team at first. No one else comes from an all white school or even a town as small as me. I came to find that they accepted me very well. This is something that I was very surprised with at first. I thought, why would they accept a small town farm kid when they all came from bigger, more diverse schools. I realized that it doesn't matter where you come from or how you grew up. All that matters about your team is what you have in common with them, that being your sport. Even though we all have different personalities and came from different places we all have one thing in common, track. We are all here because we are fast and we are here to represent this University in athletics. It's truly like our own little family within the University.

After being with the team so far this season I would consider my teammates closer than some of my friends at home just because of the things that we have in common. With my friends at home we all have interests such as working around the farm, cars, and girls. One interest I never shared with my friends was track. Track has been a big part of my life. Without track I wouldn't be at the University of Illinois attaining my degree. It's so nice to share track as a common interest with my teammates. It's something that I've never had before and I think that it's more important than what I share with friends back at home. I will carry these

friendships that I have made along the way with me for the rest of my life.

Interview-Racial Segregation in Athletics

For my research I chose to interview a couple of teammates of mine about their thoughts of racial segregation within the track team here at the University. I chose to interview two teammates who came from two different backgrounds. The first teammate that I chose came from a smaller rural school where the main race at his school was white. The other teammate of mine, Ken, came from a Chicago suburb where he said that the racial makeup of his track team was around 80% African American. I wanted to get two different opinions and I chose these people because they represent different backgrounds and that way I'm getting more than just one opinion for my research.

With my first teammates interview I got a lot of answers such as what I would have said. I asked what the racial makeup of his track team in high school was and he said that it was 100% white. He said "when I first came to this University I was a little intimidated by the African Americans on the track team. I just didn't know what it was going to be like and I didn't know how to react around them so I just kept quiet. After a while I realized that they weren't any different and there was no reason to be afraid of them." The response was what I expected because with anyone you are going to be a little leery around a new race at first. I then asked him if he associated with teammates outside of track and why. He responded by saying "Not really. Sometimes we will see each other at a track party of something but it's not like we call each other up to hang out. I think it's because we don't share much of an interest outside of track. We were raised differently and have

different interests." I then asked him if he gets along with teammates of a different race during track and he responded by saying "Yes, it's so much different when we are at practice because we talk about track a lot." The last question I asked was if it wasn't for track do you think you would associate with other races at all? He said "I don't think so because I know I wouldn't have any similar interests."

My next teammate, Ken, had very similar responses. He said "80% of my track team in high school was black and I never talked to them outside of track, not even at school. It's similar to here at Illinois because I only talk to my teammates during track." I asked him why he thought this was and he said something similar to my first interviewee by saying "we don't share common interests outside of track and therefore we wouldn't have anything to talk about." Then I asked him if it wasn't for track would you get along with African Americans? He said "no, because I wouldn't want to take the step to get to know them if I didn't have any interests to share with them."

The conclusions that I have made is about all of us track athletes getting along on the track but off the track we don't ever hang out. My research is leading to find more reasons or support as to why this is. I know it's probably because we have track in common and can relate to each other but I want to find out why we don't ever hang out or do anything outside of track. The information that I was given by my teammates relates to what my observation was trying to say.

Interview Questions:

Describe your high school athletic team. What races made up your team?

Outside of your sport did you associate with teammates of another race in High

School?

Do you get along with your teammates here at the University during practices and other track events?

Do you associate with teammates of another race outside of track at UIUC? Why?

If it wasn't for track do you think you would get along with another race, such as your teammates? Why?

Survey

Questions that I asked:

What track events do you do?

- ☐ Sprints
- ☐ Distance
- ☐ Throws
- ☐ Jumps

What race could you classify your event group as?

- ☐ Primarily Black
- ☐ Primarily White
- ☐ Other

Do you get along with your event teammates during practice?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you socialize with a variety of teammates during track?

- Yes
- No

On a scale of 1-10 how much do you socialize with teammates of another race outside of track? (such as parties or get-togethers)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never

Often Rarely

What do you think that track team could do to eliminate racial segregation off of the track?

Do you think coaches consider race when recruiting track athletes? Explain.

If it wasn't for track, do you think you would feel comfortable around people of a different race?

- Yes
- No

When first joining the team, did you have any thoughts about the racial makeup of the team? Explain.

April 2, 2008

This survey that I made up consisted of questions around racial segregation

within the track and field team. I tried to hit a variety of athletes that compete in different events. I gave some surveys to the sprinters, distance runners, throwers, and the jumpers. Within those groups there was probably more African American athletes that participated in my survey. I chose to interview more African Americans so that way I'm getting more feedback from them since they are the minority of the team.

The overall results from the survey were very much what I thought they would be. I did have just a few questions where I was a little surprised from their responses. For example on the question that asked when first joining the team did you have any thoughts on the racial makeup, most people said that they didn't. It's only surprising to me probably because I didn't come from a diverse background like most everyone else did. It was unusual for me the first weeks because I didn't have any experience being around African Americans. Even the White athletes said that they didn't have any thoughts. Basically everyone was mostly agreeing with my research conclusion so far, that being that racial segregation only occurs off of the track. On the scale of 1-10 question most people put between 4-6 on how often they socialize with teammates of another race outside of track. I expected them to put even a lower number than what most of the wrote down. Like I have noticed in my other research reports, many of us don't socialize too much with other races outside of track business.

These results clearly support my theory that segregation only occurs outside of track. I have learned some things after doing this survey and getting the results back from my teammates. First, I noticed that many people don't consider

the issue as big as I thought it was. I expected many people to say that they never or rarely hang out with another race outside of practice. Second, I learned that many of my teammates didn't have any thoughts when they first joined the team about the racial makeup. Like I said, many of them did come from more diverse backgrounds than what I came from so therefore I can see why they didn't really think about it as much as I did. I guess that some of them maybe expected what it would be like ahead of time, unlike myself. I knew that the team was more diverse than what I was used to, but I didn't really think about adapting to it or fitting in before I joined the team. The last question I observed was the question asking what the track team could do to eliminate racial segregation outside of track. Many people didn't have very good responses to this question. I was hoping that they would come up with some creative ideas but a few of them didn't even know what to write down.

This survey should fit well with my overall research project. One thing that keeps happening with my reports is that I keep getting the same results or conclusions. I was hoping that maybe I would have gotten a little more feedback from my teammates on the survey. The conclusion that I got from this survey will support my other reports. I plan on focusing on why racial segregation occurs off the track and doesn't occur during track. Stuff that I plan on discussing are the results of how often team members socialize with teammates of another race outside of track. I plan on talking about one way to reduce the segregation is to learn more about your teammates so that way you will feel more comfortable around them.

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"Muslim Student Perceptions Post September 11th"

This article discusses peoples perceptions of Muslims after the 9/11 attack. It focuses on the roles the Muslims play in the U.S. and at the University of Illinois. The article asks Muslim students on how they feel about the U.S. government, and if they feel their being discriminated against here on campus. The study said that most Muslims experienced ignorance within the campus after the 9/11 incident.

This article isn't related to athletics but is an example of the first black athletes during the 1940's and how they experienced discrimination within the town where they played sports and around their University. People were telling them that they couldn't play sports because they were black. I plan on discussing how race in

track has evolved over the years and how people learn to accept the fact that it doesn't matter what race you are. Just like the Muslims on campus today, people can't make assumptions just because of the 9/11 attack.

“Cultural mapping of dorms.”

As we are all aware of the segregation within the dorms, this article focuses on trying to find the reasons why the dorms are racially segregated. The article surveyed over 40 students to find out that the 6-pack is mostly white, while PAR and FAR are mostly minority students. The article says that students self segregate themselves based on race and ethnicity. So why does this happen? Well from what we discussed in class it's because of the comfort level. People feel safer being around their own race. This relates to my article in terms of why we are segregated off the track, it's because we feel more comfortable around our own race.

“People of Influence”

This article was published last year during February, which is black history month.

The article discussed the 10 most influential African American personalities in professional sports. It focuses on Jackie Robinson, who was the first African American major league baseball player. Using this article I plan on discussing how the evolution of race in sports has affected people. This article is talking about personalities, and young minds look up to professional athletes, so therefore if we didn't have the personalities that African Americans athletes have than maybe there would be an influence on young minds. I'm just focusing on the importance of African American athletes.

“Crunching the numbers on housing discrimination”

Like the dorm segregation article, similarly this article discusses why 65% of whites and blacks live in segregated communities. It discusses several statistics about racial segregation in U.S. residential neighborhoods. Again, I’m going to discuss why we are residentially segregated by race and why we choose to do this. I plan on mainly focusing on comfort zones.

2006 OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES—SPEEDSKATING: MEN’S 1,000 METERS;
Determined Skater Makes History With Fierce Charge to the Gold.”

This article talks about Shani Davis, who was the first African American to win an individual event in the Winter Olympic Games. He won the 1,000 meter speed skating race and said that the only color he cared about after the race was the gold. This article represents what I plan on discussing in my project about how race has evolved in athletics. Without African American athletes we would not have the talented sports teams that we have today. Sports gives everyone equal opportunity and if we didn’t have that, blacks would not have accomplished what they have in sports today.

Discuss:

April 13, 2008

Introduction

Race in athletics is something more and more people tend to notice over the years. Many or almost all collegiate sports teams have their own diversity. Track and field is a sport that I looked at to try to find out some different things about the race within the sport, specifically here at the University of Illinois. To find my information I composed four different researches in order to find some information about racial segregation within the team.

The first research that I did was a group observation of the Illinois track and field team. Being an athlete on the team made the observation easy for me to do. I had been observing the team about seven months before making my research report. From the observation I found various times and reasons as to why maybe racial segregation occurs within track and field. The second research that I did for my project was interviewing a few of my teammates. Both of them were white athletes but they came from different backgrounds. I wanted to see if coming from a different background would change the way they interact within the team. From the interviews I discovered some interesting opinions that my interviewees had said. My third research consisted of surveying 15 people on the track team. I was

trying to find out if different event groups were different from the team overall in a social meaning. My last research that I did was researching documents to get some different opinions and comparisons. I found some articles that relate to my project in several ways.

The track and field team here at the University is approximately 33% African American and the other 67% Caucasian. The track team is broke up into different event groups with some events having more African Americans and some having more Caucasians.

Choosing Sides

Often during practices there is always debating going on. Most likely if anyone were to come by a practice during our stretching time, they would find that people are always arguing. Throughout this track season I have found my teammates argue at least once during every practice and even on our way to track competitions. Listening to their conversations can really leave me with some interesting thoughts, such as why does our team choose sides based on race?

From my group observation within the sprint group is when I concluded that my teammates choose sides based on their race. During the first couple weeks of practice is when I learned the most about my teammates. Meeting new people doesn't take long to learn their personalities. Within these first few weeks was when I learned about one teammate in particular. He always had to go against what someone was saying. No matter what topic you were talking about he would go against you. At first I just thought that he was the type that just wanted to

argue, but I was wrong. After listening to these arguments for a few months I came to the conclusion that he would argue to support his own race which is African American. These arguments that he was making were usually about sports or politics. We would talk about track athletes pretty often and I remember one conversation in particular that helped lead me to my conclusion. We were discussing 400 meter runners and the team had decided that Jeremy Wariner was the fastest. With Jeremy Wariner being white, this particular teammate just had to choose someone else.

So he was arguing that Michael Johnson, who is African American, was the fastest 400 meter runner. These athletes never competed against each other but their times would tell the truth, right? Even though Jeremy Wariner posted a faster time than Michael Johnson, he still had to side with Michael Johnson.

There was another incident not too long after that argument about the best Heisman trophy candidate. Usually the best collegiate football, according to statistics, player earns the Heisman trophy. The result was a little different during this observation. There were only two of the five Heisman candidates discussed in this debate and one was African American and the other one was white. Within the sprint group, approximately 80% are African American and the other 20% was white. All but one of the African Americans were arguing the Darren McFadden, who was African American, was the best football player and the four white boys and one African American were arguing the Tim Tebow, who was white, was the better player. There was no obvious player with the advantage; it was all just based on opinions. I didn't find it odd that everyone chose their racial side. I

believe that this happens a lot in life. Just from my observation I concluded that my teammates choose sides based on race. There have been more incidents where this has happened but this one was probably the most obvious one.

So do we know why sometimes we choose our racial side over another side, even though the opposing side is sometimes obviously better? From my observation I say that we just want to support our own race. Segregation can occur within the team due to arguments like I just discussed. This doesn't mean that we don't get along with each other, it's just that we almost always have different preferences and some of the time they are linked to race.

Social Preference

Segregation occurs almost anywhere within this campus. No matter where you go you can almost always recognize racial segregation. Within the track team there is segregation that occurs. I have observed my track and field teammates for about seven months now and I found that even though we are all a team, we sometimes don't act like we should.

Team interaction is something that I was very surprised about when first joining the team. All of us athletes came from different backgrounds such as big schools, small schools, black schools, white schools, mixed schools, etc. Even though we grew up differently we are all like a little family when it comes to track. With someone like myself coming from a farm and going to an all white school of around 250 students, I wasn't sure what to think of the other black kids on my team at first. No one else comes from an all white school or even a town as small

as me. I came to find that they accepted me very well. This is something that I was very surprised with at first. I thought, why would they accept a small town farm kid when they all came from bigger, more diverse schools. I realized that it doesn't matter where you come from or how you grew up. All that matters about your team is what you have in common with them, that being your sport. Even though we all have different personalities and came from different places we all have one thing in common, track. We are all here because we have athletic talent and we are here to represent this University in athletics. A while after joining the team I realized something very interesting. We never associated with each other outside of track practice or track meets.

During track my teammates and I always get along. Outside of track it's a different story. Not that we don't get along outside of track, it's just that we never really hang out with each other. If we do happen to hang out with each other, we never hang out with different races. Like myself for example, when I hang out with my teammates they are my white sprint friends or white distance runners. Observing on of my teammate's facebook pictures I saw that he and my other African American teammates had pictures together at a party. Not one of the people in the pictures was white, although they were all on the track team. One of my closer friends on the track team is African American and we talk a lot during practice because we both do the same event. One time I overheard him talking to some other teammates about a party that he went to over the weekend at a teammate's apartment. I will admit I was a little jealous because of all the funny stories they were talking about. I began to think, why didn't I go to this party?

Probably because no one invited me, nor my other white teammates. It's like we are segregated outside of track and field.

When conducting my survey a couple of questions asked: Do you get along with your event teammates during practice? Do you socialize with a variety of teammates during practice? The following question asked them to rate on a scale of 1-10 how much they associate with teammates of another race outside of track (1 being very little and 10 being often). All 15 people that I interviewed answered "yes" to the first two questions. On the next question the average that people put was a 3.6. So therefore the survey verifies that the track team socializes during track, but not so much outside of track.

When doing my interviewees I asked them the question, do you associate with teammates outside of track and why? My first interviewee, who was White and came from a rural community responded by saying "Not really. Sometimes we will see each other at a track party or something but it's not like we call each other up to hang out. I think it's because we don't share much of an interest outside of track. We were raised differently and have different interests." My second interviewee, Ken, referring as to why we don't hang out outside of track, said "we don't share common interests outside of track and therefore we wouldn't have anything to talk about."

There may not be correct reasoning's to explain why this is, but there are a few possible reasons that might have something to do with it. Comfort and safety levels can possibly play a huge role when talking about two separate races. One thing that affects the comfort and safety levels is communication. Communication

can really intimidate someone when speaking to someone of another race. I know that was the first thing that made me hesitant about speaking to my teammates of another race. I simply didn't feel comfortable around them. After my interviews were over I went back to ask them the question: Do you think comfort levels are the primary reason for people being afraid of a different race, why? My first interviewee said "that is probably a good reason why people are afraid. It makes sense because at first I didn't really know how to act or what to say around African Americans." Knowing what to say might be a reason as to why we don't try to do much team bonding outside of track. What if we said something wrong? You don't know how the person is going to react if you make a wrong comment and so to feel safe we try to avoid to be put into positions to make a wrong comment. Now I know that my teammates would never flip on myself, but that's just because I'm there teammate. Some people could think that they're making a nice comment towards someone but in reality they could really be offending them. Sometimes I forget about how different we are from each other. Saying certain words around different teammates could mean much more than what we think they do when using them with another race.

Familiarity

After being shy the first couple of weeks I know have some experience being around African Americans. I have a better understanding of their feeling so therefore I know what I can talk about and what not to talk about. Experience can play a role in feeling safe around a different race. The group segregation within the team may have a lot to do with familiarity of races. Having experience around

another race can truly make a difference. That is what happened with my experiences. Since I've been around different races for several months now, I notice myself getting more comfortable all the time. Some have a hard time even giving it a try. There was a runner on the team at the beginning of the year who would be so quiet during practice. After a couple of months he still didn't open up at all. This kid came from a smaller school, was white, and didn't have experience being around African Americans. Before finding out if he would ever open up to the team, he was cut. It was like the kid didn't want to take the first step into associating with the African American runners.

Sometimes people are leery of talking because they're afraid that what they say may be offensive to another race even if it wasn't intended to. Amoja Three Rivers says "even those with the best of intentions will display bad cultural manners. This doesn't mean that one is a bad person. Sometimes people just don't know any better." So saying something that you thought would be fine, may just not fly with a teammate of another race.

Media

The media can influence many people's minds by what they display. What the media shows may not even be similar to the way a certain race really is. Coming into the University I didn't know what to expect from my African American teammates. All I've known about African Americans is what I've seen on television. Television usually displays black people getting into trouble or displaying personalities that some black people may not even have. It's as if the media portrays a race by showing the bad side of things. I noticed that once I got

here my teammates weren't anything like a I thought they would be. Of course, they had their different personalities but none of them were "gangsters" like you see on television. Some may think they are already familiar with a race by what they see and hear but they won't know for sure until they experience it themselves. For example some black people may think that all white people are racist and therefore doesn't want to trust them because of what they see and hear from past events such as the Civil War. One event or person can influence the minds of many people. People will never know for sure what's like though until they have their own experiences with other races.

Common Interests

After observing the team for quite some time now I had come up with another reason that supports the segregation within the team. Our preferences is what makes us feel comfortable whether we are around each other or off doing our own thing. There are 55 athletes on the Illinois men's track and field team and we all have our own preferences. Although some of the preferences might overlap with one another, not one of us has all of the same preferences. There are many things that affect our socialization within our track team.

Music is one preference that may be most important. Most everyone likes listening to music and we do it about every day. At practice the other day I asked a quick question to my sprint group and asked them what kind of music they listened to. All of the African American sprinters said they listened to Rap and would listen to occasional rock but no country music. The two white sprinters, including myself, enjoy listening to rock and country music. Maybe that is part of the reason

as to why we are segregated by race outside of the sport. Going to any sort of party there's going to be music playing. What if we can't all decide on what to listen to. I know if I listened to country music with my teammates I would feel a bit awkward knowing that all of them don't like it.

Clothing is something else that I have noticed just over the past couple of weeks. Most of us aren't too big into shopping but there are a few African Americans on the team that go shopping all the time. They always wear real expensive clothing or things from Express clothing store at the mall. The other white teammate and I aren't going to dress like African Americans. It would be weird because it's not our style or our personality. This is just another reason as to why we possibly segregate outside of the sport.

Girls are one other reason that may keep us apart from each other. Don't get me wrong, we all like girls but it just depends what race the girls are. It's hard to talk to another race about girls because girls of different races can act so differently. It would be awkward for me to go up to an African American teammate and ask them for advice on a girl. Different races have their personalities so whatever my teammate told me would probably be wrong. Most of the time when people on the team get together, there are girls involved. Even being around girls of another race would make it more difficult to feel comfortable, even with your teammates there.

Race within events

As most of us probably know, our events within track and field aren't separated equally by racial makeup. The track team as a whole is 33% African

American and 67% Caucasian. Take the sprint and hurdle group for example. It is approximately 80% African American and 20% Caucasian. This is where most of the African American athletes are placed. Take an opposing group such as the distance group for example and you'll find that 100% of the distance runners are white. These two groups alone will tell you what the black and white athletes roles are within track and field. Since the sprint group and distance group obviously don't practice together, we don't know each other that well. We'll see each other at practice but we never talk a whole lot during practice and definitely not outside of practice. Since I'm part of the sprint group I only see the segregation of African Americans. Perhaps if I were a distance runner I would see that the distance group never hangs out with and African Americans. The events within track and field can really play a big role as to who socializes outside of the sport. Maybe if we were all randomly put into groups and were more diverse within our groups we would make more of an effort to call each other to do something.

Conclusion

Within the track and field team here at the University of Illinois I have noticed types of racial segregation that may be caused by the reasoning's that I explained in my project. I put together research reports to try and find out more about the segregation and my finding have been listed in my project. I observed my teammates throughout the year, surveyed 15 random track athletes and interviewed two of my teammates. I discovered that the track team often chooses sides based on race and how we socialize with the teammates that we feel comfortable around. I found that we must be familiar with different races in order

to properly socialize with one another. I found that the media can often make up peoples opinions before they even have their own experiences, like the media did to me. Common interests play a big factor in determining who we all hang out with. The last part that I researched was race within track events and I concluded that maybe we are all segregated because of this fact. There are many reasons supporting why this might happen. So after finding all of the information there is no wrong or right reason as to why we segregate racially within the team.

EUI Links: <http://hdl.handle.net/2142/1837>

Reflect: When first joining this class I wasn't so sure about the ethnographic research. After choosing my topic and writing my research plan my thoughts had changed about it. I became interested in doing my project! I really wanted to find out about racial segregation within the track team at the University. The most rewarding thing was finding some reasons as to why their might be racial segregation within the track team at UIUC. With all the research that I had collected I was surprised about some of the things that I had found, such as how people responded to my interview and survey questions. The thing that I'm most proud of about my paper is the way I organized it. After writing a few paragraphs I just kept adding on different topics to discuss and related them to my research. I think if I had more time to write the paper I would definitely go back and do some better online researching. It was hard for me to find IDEALS articles that related to my topic. I would try to spend more time searching the online university library to find articles to support my other research.

Although I didn't do everything I would have liked to accomplish in this project, I still think that it went very well for me.